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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 KABUL 002981

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SUBJECT: ZARAR LEAVES MIXED LEGACY AT MOI; ATMAR GETS OFF
TO GOOD START

Classified By: DCM Chris Dell for reasons 1.4(B) and (D)

1. (C) Summary. In the cabinet reshuffle of October 11, President Karzai replaced Minister of Interior Moqbal Zarar with Minister of Education Mohammad Hanif Atmar. While Zarar was a willing partner with the U.S. and succeeded in making (largely unacknowledged) initial organizational changes and adopting a plan for broader reform, he was too often seen as a weak leader who was unable to root out the pervasive corruption in his ministry. Atmar comes in with a reputation for toughness, competency, initiative and honesty. Initial impressions engender hope for an accelerated pace of reform and support for many USG initiatives. End Summary.

2. (S/NF) On October 11, as part of a broader cabinet reshuffle, President Karzai replaced Interior Minister Moqbal Zarar with Education Minister Mohammad Hanif Atmar. Zarar was offered the position of Minister of Repatriation and Refugee Affairs but turned it down. He told contacts close to the Embassy that he was angry with the dismissal, blaming the Europeans and United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for pressuring Karzai to replace him. (Note. A NYT article on October 11 incorrectly reported that the U.S. had also pushed for Zarar's ouster. End note). Zarar repeatedly told contacts he did not blame the U.S. With Karzai facing elections in 2009, tribal and national politics may have played a factor in the transition as well, with Zarar a Tajik and Atmar a Pashtun. In the meantime, Atmar has met with the Ambassador and DCM, as well as CENTCOM Commander General David Petraeus, and continues to express his support for U.S. and Coalition efforts to build up the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). CSTC-A reports excellent cooperation with Atmar, who seems to welcome a strong U.S. partnership.

THE ZARAR LEGACY: A Foundation for PROGRESS AT MOI

13. (U) Zarar and the international community (IC) recognized that the first priorities for Interior Ministry (MOI) reform were to address the inefficient organizational structure of the Interior ministry and endemic corruption. MOI, CSTC-A and the European Union Police Mission (EUPOL) established an MOI Headquarters Restructuring Group to begin a process to clarify control of operational and support activities within the ministry, and place the Afghan National Police (ANP) under a single chain of command with a Police Commissioner at the top. In January 2008, Minister Zarar approved a

restructuring plan drafted by CSTC-A (in coordination with EUPOL and the International Community). Starting with vision and mission statements, Minister Zarar and his partners worked on an implementation plan that identified 15 core systems that would make up the new MOI. They had hoped to roll out the implementation plan in the next couple of months, with the goal of having the reformed MOI in line with the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) by December 2010.

¶4. (U) During Zarar,s tenure, he also took critical steps toward development of the first true Afghan National Police (ANP) force in this country,s history. MOI and its advisory team, principally American, also took steps to abolish the highly corrupt Afghan Highway Police and the incompetent Afghan National Auxiliary Police. Through the efforts of Zarar and MOI mentors, as of October 2008, neither undesirable organization now exists on the national staffing authorization (Tashkil). The more capable Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP) was beefed up, doubling in size over the past year. ANCOP recruits received a full 14 weeks of training, which brought 12 of its 20 battalions up to "fully capable" status.

¶5. (U) Zarar helped to kick off numerous individual initiatives to reform and develop a new ANP. These ranged from establishing proper command and control functions filtering down from MOI, to implementing rank and pay reform schemes designed to invert the top-heavy rank pyramid and to ensure that police officers received their full pay directly and without the cuts that used to be siphoned off by

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supervisors. In the original MOI, the staffing pattern showed 9525 officers but there were actually 17,000 on hand. Nine thousand of those officers were identified for "rank reform" (i.e., dismissals or rank reduction), and 8100 such orders were executed. Zarar also set in motion a plan to establish police pay parity with the Afghan National Army (ANA) in order to boost police recruitment. Police officers in fact often experience more kinetic activity against the Taliban than their ANA counterparts, and they have suffered more than three times the number of combat fatalities. Zarar also oversaw an agreement MOI drew up with the banking industry which led to use in 31 of 34 provinces of an Electronic Payroll System; 20 provinces now offer Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) so that ANP members can receive paychecks directly into their bank accounts.

¶6. (C) The most significant advance in police reform under former Minister Zarar was the Focused District Development (FDD) program, begun in December 2007. Under FDD, police in districts in the most kinetic parts of Afghanistan were pulled off their duties for training, with their roles being temporarily filled by elite ANCOP units. To date, 3078 ANP have completed the basic 8-week training program at Regional Training Centers in Cycles 1-4 of the FDD program, and Cycle 5 started up in October. The ANP is also recruiting and training women, with 282 having completed one form of training or another. For Cycle 7, there will be a unique focus on training provincial police units in 10 critical provinces, an effort to address a perceived disconnect between MOI reform at the national level and FDD at the district level. Cycle 7 FDD training will be extended to 14 weeks, following the ANCOP training model, and will for the first time include mentors from Coalition partners. The Dutch, Germans and British have all indicated a willingness to contribute Police Mentor Teams (PMT) in significant numbers for the first time. Having expressed an interest in long-term police development, NATO/ISAF has also for the first time expressed an interest in participating in the last phase of FDD training, "Overwatch and Sustainment", wherein the Regional Commands would provide resources to supplement PMTs in the field.

17. (C) Former Minister Zarar made significant gains on reform of the MOI and ANP in a relatively short period of time, but much remains. Despite his efforts and those of his mentors, the reality continues to be that MOI is one of the most corrupt ministries in the GIROA. That, combined with the worsening security situation, may have contributed to Zarar,s downfall, although he was still offered another ministry in government. While Zarar himself may not have received personal benefit from his position, he could not control others below him. Perhaps most importantly, although he was a willing partner with the U.S. and international community in reforming MOI and the ANP, he was not regarded as sufficiently "visionary" or strong enough to handle a situation in which security is perceived to be deteriorating. His lack of English also no doubt limited his interaction with international partners and did not help his image. Atmar, in contrast, speaks polished, British-accented English and has cultivated a wide circle of contacts among the international community.

18. (C) The responsibility for reforming MOI and ANP into more effective organizations has now passed to Mohammad Hanif Atmar, a man of apparently greater toughness and better managerial skills. He had shown such qualities in his previous ministries (Education and Rural Rehabilitation and Development), and given evidence of them in his first few weeks at MOI. For example, as the date approached for a vote in Parliament on a provision in the new Police Law that would shift command and control of the ANP from MOI to provincial governors, gutting a key reform, Atmar understood the importance from day one. He called a high-level meeting of interested parties and inserted himself in the process in a way that Zarar never had. He has also fended off approaches from the new EUPOL Head of Mission to take over ANCOP

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training, an idea that was never broached with CSTC-A. In his early meetings with U.S. officials, including General Petraeus, Atmar laid out fighting corruption, counter-narcotics, election security, and improving security for ordinary citizens in Kabul and Herat as his priorities.

COMMENT

19. (C) Atmar is widely respected among Afghan leadership and the IC for his effective leadership of his two previous ministries. He has acknowledged that he knows political considerations may lead to conflicts with the Palace over appointments within the MOI, but believes he can handle them. He has told the DCM that he is also cognizant of the push by many governors to gain control over ANP within their provinces, and that he is confident he can also handle them. Atmar is also astute enough to manage approaches from UNAMA, who have been on a push of late to become more involved in police training. On the other hand, he knows that he has to prove his value to President Karzai rapidly as well. In a meeting with CJTF-101, Atmar said that Karzai charged him with improving security in Kabul and Herat in particular. Criminal kidnapping has become a growth industry in both places, and Atmar is in the process of establishing an Anti-Kidnapping Unit in the MOI (with the help of CSTC-A). He has spoken to CSTC-A of organizational arrangements within MOI that will strengthen his hand in fighting police corruption. So far, Atmar is off to a good start.

WOOD